

Wildlife Diversity News

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Winter 2012

Iowa Barn Owls Still Kickin'

May 2010 was the last time a report was given for the status of the barn owl in Iowa. No nesting was known in Iowa, at that time, and only two barn owl sightings had been received. While barn owl numbers seemed to be on the rise during the mid-1990s through 2006, harsh winter weather and above average rainfall in the years since that time may have taken a toll on this species.

Barn owls do not tend to survive well in winters with deep snow and long periods of extreme cold; and their nesting is tied very closely to the abundance of their favored prey, meadow vole (a species that does not reproduce well when it is too wet). However, in spite of less than ideal conditions, barn owls continue to survive and reproduce. By the end of 2010, this office had received reports of one barn owl each in Audubon, Decatur, Mahaska, Monroe, Taylor, and Van Buren counties; a pair of barn owls in Carroll Co.; and nesting pairs with four young each in Wapello and Crawford counties. In fact, for both Wapello and Crawford counties, these were the first confirmed barn owl nesting records in at least 50 years.

News for the 2011 nesting season is even better than that of 2010 for this Iowa Endangered species. It appears that Iowa's meadow vole population is increasing, and for the first time since 2007, six barn owl nests were reported. These ghostly owls nested twice in Decatur Co. (first documented nest record ever for this county) in a steel corn bin, fledging at least three young the first nesting but none during the second. Five young fledged from a Clarke Co. barn; at least one young fledged from a Wayne Co. barn; three young fledged from a Marion Co. corncrib; and a nest under a bridge in Lucas Co. was



Barn Owl.
Photo by Pat Schlarbaum.

unsuccessful. Besides these six nest reports, there were confirmed observations of barn owls made at additional locations in the following five counties: Sac, Shelby, Lucas, Wayne, and Tama (two locations). One of the last barn owl sightings in 2011 was at a barn that contains a nest box, so we have our fingers crossed that there will be baby barn

owls in that nest box in 2012.

Another positive note: even though Iowa's Breeding Bird Survey data indicate that fully 57% of Iowa's grassland birds are significantly declining, it does not appear that the barn owl is one of them. Probably the number one reason for this is related to the 1.6 million acres of Conservation Reserve Program grasslands that now exist in Iowa, providing large numbers of small rodents for barn owls to feed upon. Another reason may be the fact that more and more people are putting up nest boxes for this species, and they are protecting the barn owl from disturbance when it shows up in their outbuildings and grain bins.

Many thanks to the growing number of people who value the barn owl and who encourage its presence on their properties. If you wish to report a barn owl sighting or would like information on how to put in place your own barn owl nest box, please contact me by phone (515-432-2823 ext. 106) or email (bruce.ehresman@dnr.iowa.gov).

- Bruce Ehresman
Wildlife Diversity Avian Ecologist

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Edited by Natalie Randall

Diversity Dispatch

Breaking News in the Wide World of Wildlife

Psychological Benefits of Bird Song?

A new study being conducted at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom will look at how birdsong can affect the sense of wellness and creativity in people. Eleanor Ratcliffe, the principal investigator of this research, cites that anecdotal evidence exists suggesting people have a positive response to birdsong stimuli. Such positive responses include relaxation, creative thinking, increased ability to complete tasks, and overall “restorative” effects. To test this hypothesis, Ratcliffe will conduct interviews to quantify people’s perception of bird song, and analyze individuals behavioral responses to various bird songs. Possibly, just one more way that getting outside to explore nature can benefit our mental health!

Climate Change May Prompt Frequency Shift in Ladybug Color

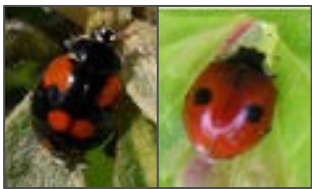


Photo by Luis Fernández García (left ladybug).
Photo by Adrian Benko (right ladybug).

An ongoing study by geneticist Paul Brakefield from the University of Cambridge has found that the Two-spot Ladybug of the Netherlands has become lighter over a 25-year period, coinciding with temperature increases associated with Global Climate Change. When data collection began in the 1980s, ladybugs living near warmer coastal areas were primarily red with black spots, while ladybugs living in cooler inland areas were primarily black with red spots. Brakefield hypothesizes that darker (black) ladybugs can retain more heat, whereas lighter (red) ladybugs can reflect more heat. As temperatures increased over the 25-year sampling period, the researchers noticed the proportion of red ladybugs increased as well, even in formerly cooler inland areas. This may suggest the ladybugs that can tolerate increasing temperatures have a fitness advantage over those that cannot. To confirm the color phase-temperature correlation, laboratory studies manipulating temperature across generations of the Two-spot Ladybug, while tracking color changes, would be necessary.

Tiniest Tetrapods are...

Frogs! That’s right, the smallest classified four-legged vertebrates are two newly identified frog species in Papua New Guinea (*Paedophryne* sp.). These minute creatures are smaller than a dime, with adults reaching only 0.4 inches in length—so small, that females cannot produce more than two eggs during amplexus, which greatly restricts the fecundity of these species. These frogs are found living in damp moss and leaf litter on the tropical forest floor, and their diet likely consists of mites and other small invertebrates.



Paedophryne amanuensis.
Photo by Louisiana State University, Christopher Austin.

Volunteer Work Shows Eagle Numbers Increasing

Since the eagle’s celebrated return to Iowa in the late seventies, their numbers have been on the rise. Fortunately, 2011 proved to be no different. Last year, we received reports on 290 territories, 50 of which were first-time reports. The majority (71%) of these nests were occupied by pairs. Ninety-one counties in Iowa now have eagle nests, with Grundy, Pocahontas, and Wright counties reporting for the first time. For comparison, 265 territories were reported in 2010, with 47 of those territories reported on for the first time.

Not all territories came with data on young or the success of fledglings. However, we do know that 76 territories produced a total of 116 young. If we extrapolate this data, it’s estimated that 306 young eagles were produced in Iowa last year. That’s a big jump from an



Bald Eagle
eaglet and
adult in nest.
Photo
courtesy of
Mary Ellen
Leicht.

estimated 253 eaglets hatched in 2010.

While eagle nests have been monitored for years, a new aspect in 2011 was an aerial survey for eagle nests. Volunteers from within the DNR scanned the trees for nests from small planes last spring before leaf-out. Over 1700 miles of potential eagle habitat was flown. Only five unknown nests and five

previously-observed nests were detected. By comparison, ground surveys over the same area had detected thirteen nests. The 2011 flights were a test to see if this type of survey would be useful in Iowa. A low nest-detection rate, however, indicated that the Iowa landscape is not ideal for an aerial survey. Ground surveys, such as those performed by our volunteers, are more cost-effective and produce better data. It is likely that we will discontinue the aerial surveys next year.

Looking forward to 2012, our goal is to have a higher percentage of sentinel nests monitored. These sentinel nests should be monitored every year, so we can watch for changes in Iowa’s eagle population. In 2011, however, only

Continued on Page 3

Eagles (continued)

81 of the 135 sentinel nests were assigned to a volunteer for monitoring. We received data on only 69 of those nests, which represents just 20% of active territories in Iowa. In 2012, we hope to receive data on all our monitored nests, as well as find volunteers to monitor unassigned territories.

If you are interested in getting involved with the monitoring of eagle, hawk, or owl nests, please go to www.iowadnr.gov/volunteerwildlifemonitoring.aspx for more information.

-Bridie Nixon
Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program
Coordinator, AmeriCorps



Want to get involved with next year's Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Frog & Toad Call Surveys? Visit: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/volunteerwildlifemonitoring.aspx>

Turtle Hibernacula

Recently installed turtle hibernacula in Greene County are another example of how our Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) Staff continues to provide wildlife habitat, specifically for non-game species in this case. Of course, all of our WMUs implement habitat improvement projects for nongame species on a regular basis, but the Saylorville WMU is housed out of the same location as the Wildlife Diversity Program, so it's easier to know what they've been up to. The Saylorville WMU turtle hibernacula project is meant to provide over-wintering structures for the state threatened Blanding's Turtle in some of the Wildlife Management Areas.

These turtle hibernacula structures are essentially large wooden boxes buried into the stream bank. They are placed in such a manner as to



Dean Nelson (in cab) and Nick Jordan (right) of the Saylorville WMU prepare to install a turtle hibernaculum.

Photo by Steve Espeland.

fill with sediment from the stream. This sediment provides the perfect location for turtles to burrow into for the winter, and the wooden box itself provides stability for the sediment. Once the silt settles into the box, it is unlikely to be washed further downstream during the winter.

From the photos, you can see the size of the box is approximately 3.5 feet tall by 3.5 feet wide by 5 feet deep. The structure is buried about 2-3 feet into the bottom silt and the top is covered with backfill so the hibernaculum is incorporated into the stream bank. These structures were installed in conjunction with ongoing streamside stabilization work. Additionally, native vegetation seedlings were made in the surrounding uplands. While the hibernacula were placed specifically for Blanding's Turtles in areas known to harbor

this species (or that have had Blanding's Turtles in the past), we expect that many turtle species may use them.

If you are interested in installing a turtle hibernaculum on your property, the best plans and instructions are available in a publication by Trout Unlimited (in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and many other organizations, including the IDNR). This publication is in the process of being updated, but the older version is still available at: <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/TechNotes/Biology/TechNote16.pdf> Hibernacula designs used by the Saylorville WMU are shown on page 40.

-Karen Kinkead
Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator



Blanding's Turtle.
Photo by Jeff LeClere.



The hibernaculum is covered with backfill.
Photo by Steve Espeland.

Stay Tuned! "News from the Frog Pond" will return in the WDP Spring Newsletter!



Wildlife Diversity Program Teamputting a face to a name!

From left to right: **Paul Frese** (*Wildlife Diversity Technician II*), **Bruce Ehresman** (*Wildlife Diversity Avian Ecologist*), **Shane Patterson** (*BBA Volunteer Coordinator*), **Stephanie Shepherd** (*Surveys and Data Coordinator*), **Tyler Harms** (*MSIM Biologist*), **Karen Kinkead** (*Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator*), **Pat Schlarbaum** (*Wildlife Diversity Technician II*), **Bridie Nixon** (*VWMP Coordinator*), **Natalie Randall** (*WDP Outreach Assistant*), and **Katy Reeder** (*Wildlife Action Plan Manager*, not pictured).



No, this isn't about making sure you recycle your old returns or file electronically, it's about our 2012 spokes-frog for the wildlife tax check-off! Every year we try to remind folks that there is an easy way to donate to wildlife conservation in Iowa through the state tax form and this year we're getting some help from a spectacular photo of a Gray Tree Frog by Kristin

Remember to Go Green this Tax Season!

Fankhauser. The wildlife check-off is a main funding source for the Wildlife Diversity Program's operations.

The 2010 tax year was a good year. The number of folks donating increased and the amount of money donated was up by almost \$17,000 from

2009. Numbers have been drastically decreasing over the last few years so this boost upward was really heartening. In fact, the amount donated was the highest since 2004!

We'd love to keep this upward trend rolling! So if you have a refund coming back this time around, think about donating a portion of it to the Fish and Wildlife Fund on line 58

of your state tax form. If you work with a tax professional you may need to remind them a few times that you'd like to donate, as it's hidden way towards the end of the form. Any little bit helps – if every taxpayer in Iowa gave just \$1 to the check-off it would bring in over \$1.5 million dollars for wildlife conservation.

Finally, a big thank you to all of you who have donated to the check-off in the past or supported the diversity program in a myriad of other ways – we couldn't do what we do without you. I hope 2012 brings many good things to all of you and for wildlife conservation in Iowa. Happy Tax Season!

—Stephanie Shepherd
Surveys & Data Coordinator

Meet the New Members of the Wildlife Diversity Program!

Shane Patterson, Breeding Bird Atlas Volunteer Coordinator

Shane took over the position of Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas volunteer coordinator last fall. As one of the most active BBA participants since the project's inception in 2008, he has hit the ground running with further data-entry, summaries, and preparations for the upcoming field season.

Shane grew up in the predominantly agricultural landscape of central Illinois. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Biology from Eastern Illinois University, where he was a member of three academic honor societies. Through family, work, and education, Shane has fostered his interest in nature while visiting 46 US states and five foreign countries. A grassland-bird study in the Prairie Pothole Region eventually brought him to ISU's wildlife extension, thus beginning his deeper exploration of Iowa's outdoors.

Most recently, he has assisted with the WDP's MSIM program as a surveyor of birds, butterflies, and many other taxa. Prior to joining the WDP, he worked on a multi-year project studying Iowa Audubon's Important Bird Areas, during which he enabled over 20 nominated sites to reach official, nationally-recognized IBA status.

Shane currently resides in Ames and serves on Big Bluestem Audubon's board as an officer and as the club's state-level representative, along with coordinating the annual Ames Christmas Bird Count. He has spoken about wildlife topics at events like Iowa's Pelican Festival, and he has written multiple articles on birds and conservation.

Shane has enjoyed his experiences with the wildlife diversity team, and he looks forward to seeing everyone out in the field again this year!



Natalie Randall, Wildlife Diversity Program Outreach Assistant

Natalie began working as the WDP Outreach Assistant in October 2011. Since that time, she has helped to create and distribute wildlife education materials to the general public, such as Bird Conservation Area brochures, interpretive signage for public land, and, of course, the WDP newsletter! As the Outreach Assistant, Natalie also helps promote non-game wildlife at public events, such as the recent Bald Eagle Days programs around the state.

Born and raised in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Natalie received her B.S. degree in Applied Ecology and Environmental Science from Michigan Tech University in 2005. Following this, Natalie worked as a wildlife assistant for the Michigan DNR until moving to Iowa in 2007, when she began working as a Natural Resource Aid for the Wildlife Diversity MSIM program. In 2008, she began her graduate work at Iowa State University, where her research focused on how West Nile Virus exposure in peridomestic birds varied with central Iowa land use. After graduating in the spring of 2011 with a Masters degree in Wildlife Ecology, Natalie spent the summer on a post-graduate appointment experimenting with laboratory assays for measuring innate immunity in avians.

Natalie is enjoying the opportunity to both work with and learn from the Wildlife Diversity Program crew, as well as talk with the public about the great wildlife that can be found in the state of Iowa.

Tyler Harms, Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Biologist

Tyler started as the MSIM Biologist on January 23, 2012 and is very excited about his new position. He is currently housed at Iowa State University in the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management but will be spending a considerable amount of time at the Boone Research Station. Tyler's main role as the MSIM Biologist is to analyze data collected for the MSIM project and disseminate results and information through scientific literature, technical reports, and presentations. He will also assist with data collection in the field and other logistical aspects of the project.

Tyler grew up in the small town of Titonka in north-central Iowa. He earned a B.S. in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University in 2009 and an M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from Iowa State University in 2011. His M.S. research evaluated the distribution, abundance, and habitat associations of secretive marsh birds in Iowa. After finishing his M.S. degree, Tyler worked for three months as a Research Technician for Iowa State University on a long-term project studying the reproductive biology of the Mountain Plover in northeast Montana. Tyler then spent three months as a Natural Resource Aide for the Iowa DNR on the MSIM project and recently came from Pheasants Forever where he was a Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist in central Iowa.

Tyler enjoys all outdoor activities, but spends most of his time birding, cycling, hunting, and fishing. He is very excited to join the Wildlife Diversity team and looks forward to working with and learning from everyone.



2011 Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Program (MSIM) Update

The 2011 field season has only been over for a couple months and I'm already looking forward to the next season. That is a good sign that 2011 was a good year for the MSIM program! Although we had a slow start with hiring problems and a snowstorm in mid-April, lack of significant flooding on our properties and lower mosquito numbers in much of the state made it a very pleasant season overall. Most of our crews had up to 5 members this year, although many crews had a constantly shifting group due to permanent job opportunities arising, which is a good thing! While working on the MSIM project, crews are tasked with learning a variety of survey protocols, species identification, equipment use, and data documentation methods, all while working long hours in often poor environmental conditions. We began the year with snowstorms and freezing temps, had over 10 days in July with temperatures in the upper 90s, and endured lots of soggy days. In spite of this, the hard working crews tallied an impressive list of species for each area, including many species of greatest conservation need (SGCN).



Banded pennant. Photo by Ryan Rasmussen.

The Clear Lake crew, at times consisting of Sam Wetter, Danny Rose, Andy Stanberg, Andrew Edgcumb, Ryan Wilcke, Emily Gulden, and Tyler Harms, worked in Black Hawk, Clay, Hancock, Winnebago, Wright and Worth counties. Their travels found them mostly in prairie pothole country where they discov-



Orangethroat darter. Photo by Ryan Rasmussen.

ered some interesting species such as the ermine, Blanding's turtle and central mudminnow.

The Sweet Marsh crew spent time in Bremer, Chickasaw, Fayette, Howard, Mitchell, and Winneshiek counties. This crew, made up of Andrew Johnson, Mike Barrett, Chris Loebach, Jordan DeGraaf, and Melissa Boehmer, surveyed a variety of habitat types, from oak/hickory woodland to native prairie to cold trout streams. Some notable finds this year were the central newt, rusty snaketail dragonfly, and pickerel frog.

The Otter Creek crew worked in Hardin, Grundy, Tama, Jasper, Poweshiek, Decatur, Ringgold and Keokuk counties. Matt Stephenson, Kevin Haupt, Dana Sinn, Sara Sprecher, Shane Patterson and Craig Marshall were all part of the Otter Creek crew. They surveyed a variety of grasslands, woodlands, marshes, and riparian areas and found some uncommon snake species such as the smooth green snake, smooth earth snake and Graham's crayfish snake.

The Mississippi River crew worked in Clinton, Scott, Johnson, and Muscatine counties. Derek Leigh, Ben Scheberl, Dexter Yaddof, and Rachel Townsend made up the Mississippi River crew. Many of their sites were bottom-land woodlands along the Mississippi River which were flooded much of the spring. Even with the difficult conditions they found some great stuff, such as the six-lined racerunner, mud darter, and central newt, which are all SGCN crit-

The Rathbun crew traversed Appanoose, Davis, Decatur, Monroe, Wapello, and Wayne counties. Ryan Rasmussen, Casey Bergthold, Ryann Cressey, and Jeremy Brauckman joined the Rathbun crew and were able to add at least two dragonfly species to the state: the Blue Corporal and Banded Pennant. They also recorded over 30 species of dragonflies and damselflies from one small pond on Eldon Wildlife Area in Davis County! In addition, they documented numerous SGCN species such as the slender glass lizard, byssus skipper, and orangethroat darter.



Slender glass lizard.
Photo by Ryan Rasmussen.

With winter upon us, we have mountains of data to sort through and big plans for next season. The MSIM project has documented dozens of state and county records in the last four years, which helps us to better understand groups of species and their ecological needs. We greatly appreciate the cooperation and access from Iowa landowners such as the County Conservation Boards, State Parks, Army Corp of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, private landowners, and the IDNR Forestry and Wildlife Bureaus. Each year we look forward to partnering with Iowa's landowners so we can learn more about Iowa's wildlife species and the habitat they require.

- Paul Frese
Wildlife Diversity Technician II

For more information about the MSIM project, e-mail paul.frese@dnr.iowa.gov

BBA 2: The Final Year is Upon Us!

The Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) is moving along nicely heading into the final year of data collection. As of this writing, 126 participants have logged over 6,900 BBA field hours. In 2011 alone, we confirmed nesting for 36 of the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan's species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), contributing to a total of 45 SGCN birds confirmed for the span of the project. Among these highlights last year were American Bittern, Osprey, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Sandhill Crane, Black Tern, Black-billed Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Acadian Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike,

White Pine Hollow
State Preserve,
BBA block #326.
Photo by Shane
Patterson.



Bell's Vireo, Veery, Blue-winged Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Hooded Warbler, and Henslow's Sparrow.

Some other noteworthy confirmations in '11 involved Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Northern Bobwhite, Red-necked Grebe, Eared Grebe, Great Egret, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Virginia Rail, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Pine Siskin. Various rare summertime birds (e.g., American Black Duck and Long-eared Owl) made appearances as possible or probable nesters, but a Black Rail near Coralville Reservoir stood out as the year's most exceptional discovery.

Data entry has proceeded into the winter months, with multiple observers having gathered information on used nests and eggshells. And although the warm weather of the primary field season might seem far away at the moment, plans are already being put into place for BBA blockbusting events to be hosted by wildlife clubs throughout the state.



Ruby-throated
Hummingbird female
on nest.
Photo by Shane
Patterson.

The previous coordinators (Nicki Nagl and Billy Reiter-Marolf) each did a great job during their time with the atlas, and I am excited to be continuing the growing tradition that they established.

-Shane Patterson
Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas Volunteer
Coordinator

*To learn more and join the effort,
go to: <http://bba.iowabirds.org/>*

Name that Nest!

Did you know it is still possible to document Iowa's breeding birds for the Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) even after the breeding season is over? The nests birds leave behind are evidence of their breeding, and, often, can be easily seen after the leaves senesce in the Fall. The lack of snowcover during the early part of this winter has also helped to keep used nests intact and visible to BBA volunteers.

The next trick is to identify the bird species that built the nest. A good field guide to bird nests will be helpful, as well as a small ruler for measuring nest dimensions. Additionally, pay attention to the height of the nest from the ground, the materials comprising the nest (e.g., cattail down, bark strips, lichen), the medium in which the nest was built (e.g., white oak tree, briar thicket), as well as the surrounding

habitat (e.g., marsh, savannah).

To help you practice your nest ID skills, try to "Name that Nest" based on the photo and supplemental information, below. E-mail your answer to natalie.randall@dnr.iowa.gov. The winner will receive a 2011 Non-game Support Certificate, the final year for which



Do you know whose
nest this is?



Specs

Height from ground: 56" (~4.5')
Tree species: Autumn Olive
Habitat: open roadside in Boone Co.
Outside diameter: 2 7/8"
Height: 2 3/4"
Inside diameter: 2"
Depth: 1 1/2"

Species Spotlight: Great Golden Digger Wasp

Often times people think they need to travel past their backyard and out of town to find cool wildlife species. But interesting wildlife can be found as close as a bare patch of dirt along the walkway to your house...as I found out myself this past summer when I discovered a small colony of Great Golden Digger Wasps and their burrows right along the pavers leading to my back porch!

Great Golden Digger Wasp.
Photo by Natalie Randall.



Great Golden Digger Wasps (*Sphex ichneumoneus*) are a predatory wasp belonging to the *Sphex* genus, and they are found throughout North America. I have to admit, I was a little intimidated the first time I saw this particular wasp: they are an inch (or more!) long, with striking red-orange, gold, and black markings. But don't worry, these wasps are not aggressive and are actually a beneficial predator of some common insect pests.

Every summer, female Great Golden Diggers will select a bare, compacted area of clay and sand in which they will

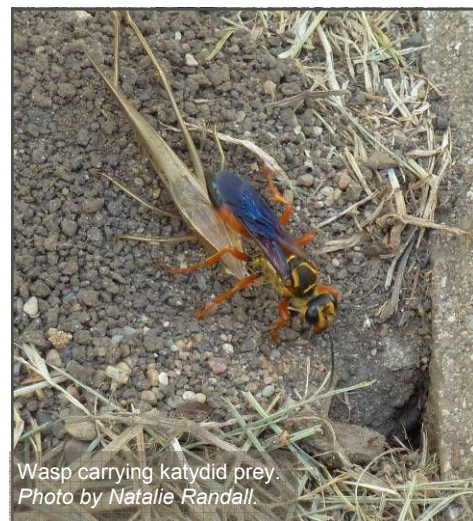
dig one to several vertical burrows, each four to six inches down, that branch into several horizontal secondary tunnels. Each of these secondary tunnels are larval cells in which the next generation will develop.

Once the burrow excavation is complete, the female wasp begins to search for her prey, which she will stock in each larval cell along with an egg she's laid. The most common prey Great Golden Diggers will hunt for are various species of grasshoppers and katydids (which are often larger than the wasp itself!). The female wasp stings her prey to paralyze it, and then either flies or drags the prey back to her burrow entrance.

This is where things get particularly interesting: this species is programmed to perform an exact series of behaviors before it will take its paralyzed prey down into the larval cell. First, the wasp will maneuver its prey to a very specific position outside the burrow entrance, then leave the prey item there while she does a "tunnel inspection".



Wasp excavating a burrow.
Photo by Natalie Randall.



Wasp carrying katydid prey.
Photo by Natalie Randall.

Next, the wasp partially emerges from the burrow, grabs her prey, and drags it into a larval cell. Experiments have shown that if the female wasp finds her prey item has been moved- even an inch- upon returning from her burrow inspection, she will initiate the same sequence of events by re-positioning the prey item at the burrow entrance and re-inspecting the tunnel before taking her prey down.

After stocking the larval cell with her prey and an egg, the female Great Golden Digger refills the burrow to close it. The developing larvae will overwinter here and emerge the following summer to begin a new generation.

Keep an eye out for these entertaining insects next summer- they may be as close as your own backyard!

- Natalie Randall
WDP Outreach Assistant

New Owl and Turtle Posters!

The Wildlife Diversity Program has a couple of new posters available that were created to help support the Fish and Wildlife Fund Tax Check-off - we hand them out to tax preparers to hang in their office or give to their clients that donate. We also wanted these to be educational. They were designed by Billy Reiter-Marolf, our former Breeding Bird Atlas coordinator, and feature the owls and turtles of Iowa. The posters are free to educators and tax preparers, though a little will be charged to help with shipping (less than 15 posters = \$5; more than 15 = \$10), and are \$2.00 each for everyone else (call the Boone Wildlife Research Station at 515-432-2823 to order). Hope you enjoy them!



Falcon Field Trip Opportunity

A Falcon Field Trip is planned for May 4 and 5 in NE Iowa. An opportunity to hear and see falcons on the cliffs will be available near Harper's Ferry, Iowa. These historic falcon eyries, or nest sites, became silent in 1967 as Peregrine Falcons were eradicated from the Mississippi River to the east coast. However, the year 2000 saw Peregrine Falcons return to nest on the cliffs of NE Iowa again. The Falcon Field Trip will help to celebrate their re-establishment in this part of the state. Activities for the public will kick off with a Mississippi River Fish Fry to be served at **Harper's Ferry Community Center, Friday, May 4, at 6PM**, where a free-will offering will be accepted. Tribal elders of the Ho-Chunk Nation from Black River Falls, WI, will be presenting their beliefs about falcons returning to the flyway. On Saturday, May 5, Captain Robert Vavra, with Maiden Voyage River Tours, will be hosting tours of falcon cliffs and associated wildlife flora and fauna of the greatest flyway on the planet. If you've ever cherished a desire to see and hear Peregrine Falcons, Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, and an assortment of waterfowl and shorebirds, this outing should be fulfilling. The 2½ hour tour will be \$15 for adults and free for children.

The past 15 years have told a promising story of restoring Iowa's Peregrine Falcons to natural cliff sites. In 1997, researcher Bob Anderson moved his Raptor Resource Project to Iowa from Hugo, MN to oversee falcon releases along the Upper Iowa and Mississippi River. In total, there were 164 peregrines hacked (released) at sites across Iowa from 1989-2003. Of these, 84 were released along the Mississippi River, and 66 peregrines were released from the historic bluffs at Bluffton, Effigy Mounds, and Dubuque Quarry.

Thanks to efforts from the Raptor Resource Project, a falcon pair nested at a cliff near Lansing in 2000, where peregrines had historically nested. According to Bud Tordoff, Midwest Peregrine Falcon Recovery Co-Coordinator, "These were the first young peregrines known to fledge from a cliff nest in the Mississippi River valley since the extirpation of the original population by DDT in the 1950s and 1960s." Additionally, wild peregrines were produced on other Mississippi River cliffs in 2000, the first time in at least three decades.

Spectators using spotting scopes to view Peregrine Falcons.

Photo by Pat Schlarbaum.



According to Dr. Patrick Redig, Midwest Peregrine Falcon Recovery Co-Coordinator, 161 pairs nested throughout the Midwest in 2011, which produced 838 young. Wildlife enthusiasts now have a wonderful opportunity to enjoy this recovered species. When scientist Rachel Carson alarmed the environmental community of an imminent "Silent Spring" in 1962, falcons and scores of other wildlife were disappearing. As the standard bearer of the Endangered Species Act, Peregrine Falcons were wiped out in Iowa and all states to our east. Now that their courtship calls have returned, the cliffs are silent no longer. Come out to hear, see, and learn ways to ensure that falcons — and all wildlife — live on from our generation to the next and the next and forever. See you in Harper's Ferry, it should *sound* good, too!

—Pat Schlarbaum

Wildlife Diversity Technician II

2012 Prairie Chicken Festival

Prairie Chicken males on a lek.
Photo by Roger Hill.



Kellerton Grassland Bird Conservation Area will host a Prairie Chicken Festival April 6 and 7. Yankton Chief Blue Star Eagle, Sherwyn Zephier and wife Estellene will provide a public program on Prairie Chickens in Yankton culture and world class Prairie Chicken

dance. Native drum and dance regalia will be included at the public program **5:30 – 7:30PM April 6 at the Ringgold Co. Courthouse auditorium in Mount Ayr.**

There will be Prairie Chicken viewing at the Kellerton lek site before dawn ~6:30AM with professionals and spotting scopes available. Mr. and Mrs. Zephier will provide a second program at 8:30AM, Saturday, April 7 at the lek.

However, Prairie Chicken dancing and drumming will not be included with event at the lek.

Everyone has an understanding of the importance of Bald Eagles to our American way of life. The role of buffalo to native community is legendary. Plan to learn the importance of Prairie Chickens to first nation culture at this informative and entertaining presentation.

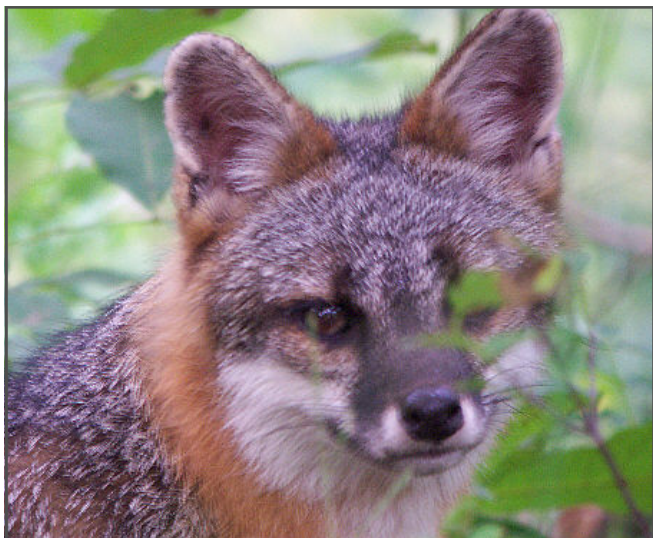


Iowa's Teaming With Wildlife Coalition

Over 230 groups working together to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.

Last Look

This Gray Fox peeking through some understory shrubs was caught on camera during MSIM fieldwork in southern Iowa. Spotting a gray fox during the daytime is a rare treat, since they are often more active at night. *Photo by Aaron Brees*



A Publication of the:



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Events Calendar

2012 Bald Eagle Appreciation Days

Feb. 25, 9am-3pm

Prairie du Chien, WI

For more information, call 800-732-1673

Feb. 26, noon-4pm

Saylorville Lake Visitor Center, Polk City, IA

Mar. 2-3, 10am-5pm

Central College, Pella, IA

(outdoor viewing at Howell Station)

Mar. 3, 8:30am-?

Nature Center, Linn Grove, IA

*To preregister, write to: Wonders of Nature, 107 Weaver, Linn Grove, IA 51033

For more information about these events, call (515) 432-2823 or go to www.missriver.org.

Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Workshops

Mar.3, 10am-4:30pm: Bird Nest Monitoring
Fontana Nature Center, Hazelton, IA

Mar.10, 10am-4:30pm: Bird Nest Monitoring
Page County Conservation Center, Clarinda, IA

Mar.17, 10am-4:30pm: Bird Nest Monitoring
JFK Memorial Park Nature Center, Fort Dodge

April 10, 5:30pm-9pm: Frog & Toad Calls
Pin Oak Lodge, Chariton, IA

April 12, 5:30pm-9pm: Frog & Toad Calls
Willow Creek Park Nature Center, Ocheyedan

April 17, 5:30pm-9pm: Frog & Toad Calls
Hartman Nature Center, Cedar Rapids, IA

Go to www.iowadnr.gov/volunteerwildlifemonitoring.aspx for info on how to register for these workshops

Prairie Chicken Festival

April 6-7, 6:30am to 9am

Kellerton Viewing Platform, Kellerton, IA
(see page 9 for more event information)

Bluebird Conference

April 14

McFarland Park, Ames, IA

Call Carol Williams at (515) 232-2516

Otter Creek Marsh Viewing Platform Dedication

April 20, Tama, IA

Call Pat Schlarbaum at (515) 432-2823, ext. 104 for more information

Sandhill Crane Surveys

April 21, sites across Iowa

Call Pat Schlarbaum at (515) 432-2823, ext. 104